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SYNOPSIS:

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Synopsis by Guy Bennett

Michael J.B. Allen. "De Libro Sexto Cum Commento."

This article is a reexamination of Rabelais' debt to Platonic hermeneutics, especially as interpreted by the neoplatonists Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Allen reveals Rabelais' ties with Florentine Platonism through analyses of passages dealing with meaning and interpretation taken from the *Books 3 and 5*.

* * *

Marc Bensimon. "Like Father, Like Son."

The subject of M. Bensimon's text is Gargantua's famous letter to his son, which he interprets as the giant's wish that his son attain perfection, and thus become, in a sense, the mirror image of his father. Bensimon complements this discussion of perfection, alterity and "otherness" with an examination of the androgyne myth.

* * *

Terence Cave. "Alien Encounters: Polyglots, Travellers, and Others in the Works of Rabelais."

Cave's term, "alien encounters," is to be understood literally—i.e., as referring to the meeting of unfamiliar or "foreign" worlds or entities. He takes as his point of departure the dialogue between Alcofrybas and the cabbage-planter, occurring on the former's descent into Pantagruel's mouth. Beginning with a reexamination of Auerbach's famous study of this passage, Cave presents a thematic analysis of the alien in the Rabelaisian text.

* * *

Gérard Defaux. "Rabelais' Realism, Again."

Characterizing Spitzerian and Lefrancian approaches to the reading of Rabelais as "one-sided" and thus insufficient, Defaux calls for a more comprehensive critical stance that would take into account the richness of the Rabelaisian text. He claims that not only does the text successfully "resist" interpretations that are uniquely historical or literary, but also that such readings completely neglect a very important element of Rabelais' work, namely, its seemingly autobiographical realism.

* * *

Edwin Duval. "History, Epic, and the Design of Rabelais' *Tiers Livre*."

In spite of its apparently heteroclit design, Duval argues, Rabelais' *Tiers Livre* does indeed have a deliberate structure. Relating two self-referential passages of the *Tiers Livre* to Lucian's *How to Write History* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Duval posits that the work presents itself as the antithesis of what a history and an epic should be.

* * *

Carla Freccero. "Feminism, Rabelais, and the Hill/Thomas Hearings: Return to a Scene of Reading."

This paper is a response to an article by Booth ("Freedom of Interpretation: Bakhtin and the Challenge of Feminist Criticism") in which he complains that feminist criticism deflates Rabelaisian humor and diminishes the pleasure of reading the text. Freccero denounces the blatant anti-feminism of traditional (i.e., paternal,

homosocial) criticism and calls for a complete reconfiguration of Rabelaisian studies to include the feminist voice.

* * *

Thomas Greene. "Rabelais and the Language of Malediction."

The problem addressed by Greene here is one of compatibility—that of the Rabelaisian text's supposed medicinal qualities with its preponderance of invective and verbal abuse. He attempts a reconciliation of these apparently conflicting elements by examining the "sanitizing" connection between therapy and abuse, the healing power of "magic words" and incantations, and the "defensive" uses of curses and malediction.

* * *

Michel Jeanneret. "Signs Gone Wild: the Dismantling of Allegory."

The identification of signs and the question of their interpretation are the subject of this paper. Jeanneret clarifies Rabelais' position in the semiological and hermeneutical debate that flourished in the sixteenth century by comparing passages from *Books 3 and 4* to the interpretative strategies that characterized Medieval scholasticism, neoplatonism and Erasmian evangelism.

* * *

Raymond La Charité. "The Framing of Rabelais' *Gargantua*."

La Charité presents a discussion of the compositional framing of *Gargantua* by the (literally) cryptic poems "Les fanfreluches antidotées, trouvées en un moment antique," and "Enigme en prophétie," which open and close the work. Relating them to the metaphor of the book-as-container (as contained in the work's famous prologue), he considers the implications of these enigmatic poems on Rabelais' thematics of reading and interpretation.

* * *

Jean-Claude Margolin. "Rabelais, Erasmus' Intellectual Heir?"

As the title indicates, Margolin's subject is the influence exercised by Erasmus on Rabelais. Through a series of comparative textual analyses, Margolin reveals Rabelais' indebtedness to Erasmian thought regarding the conception of human folly on the one hand,

and that of religion on the other. The final portion of the essay is devoted to a stylistic comparison of the two authors from the point of view of the dialogic rapport they establish with the reader.

* * *

Richard Regosin. "Opening Discourse."

In his discussion of "opening discourses," Regosin focuses specifically on the prologue of the *Tiers Livre*. Central to his analysis are a comment on the ambiguous nature of this liminary text in relation to the work it introduces (for, in retelling the story of Diogenes, has the narrative not already begun?), and a reexamination of the metaphor likening the process of writing to wine pouring from a barrel as a paradoxical image of inspiration (writing of the fear that inspiration will "dry up" and produce no work is in fact productive writing).

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: As of press time, the following articles had not yet been forwarded to Mr. Bennett for inclusion in his synopsis: Claude Gaignebet's "Folklore and Mythology in Rabelais," François Rigolot's "The Three Temptations of Panurge," and Michel Butor's Keynote Address, "Les Chiffres de Rabelais."


Guy Bennett is a doctoral student at UCLA who is assisting in the editing of the Symposium papers for future publication.

PAROLES GELEES

UCLA French Studies

Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouverait
ici l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

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